



#### **Constitutions Online**

<u>Constitution, Charters of</u> <u>Freedom National Archives</u>

<u>Interactive Constitution</u> National Constitution Center

Michigan Constitution (Current and Historical) Michigan Legislature

### At the Learning Center

The Michigan Supreme Court Learning Center, a hands-on gallery in the Hall of Justice, offers tours and events, like Constitution Day, for the public. Tours are weekdays, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. (except state holidays).

Call to schedule today! 517-373-7171

# **Constitution Day**

On September 17, 1787, delegates signed the U.S. Constitution. To commemorate this historical event, federal law requires schools that receive federal funding and all federal agencies to hold programs about the Constitution on or near that date each year. Below is a "best of" set of resources featured in past issues of *Justitia*, the Learning Center's educator e-newsletter.

## **Fast Constitution Facts**

U.S. Constitution	Michigan Constitution of 1963	
Signed September 17, 1787. World's oldest written constitution still in effect	Written, 1961–62; adopted, 1963; supersedes state constitutions of 1835, 1850, and 1908	
Begins with "We the People"	Begins with "We the People"	
Defines the roles and powers of three branches of government	Defines the roles and powers of three branches of government	
Lists rights of the people in the Bill of Rights, amendments adopted in 1791	Lists rights of the people in the Declaration of Rights in Article 1, directly following the Preamble	

# At courts.mi.gov/learningcenter

The Educator Resources page includes an array of information and lessons. See the <u>Constitutions</u> page for Constitution Day resources and links.



Justitia 2 Constitution Day

# **Examining the Constitution**



Do you ask your students to examine facsimile or electronic copies of original documents? Many high-resolution versions of the U.S. Constitution, Bill of Rights, and Michigan Constitution are available online. Some sites have exciting zoom features, while others allow downloading or printing. If you prefer a low-tech option, you could even purchase paper facsimiles.

Students enjoy working in pairs or triads as they decipher the historical handwriting. It may be helpful to supply typed transcripts or assign older students to transcribe certain sections and compare their findings, since the task can be challenging.

To use online documents, you will need electronic devices, preselected websites that feature original documents, and typed transcripts. For paper documents, you will need printed or purchased facsimiles, typed transcripts, and magnifying glasses.

### **Websites with Original Documents**

Zoom in on the U.S. Constitution and Zoom in on the Bill of Rights, Colonial Williamsburg

Constitution Primary Source Set, Library of Congress

<u>Charters of Freedom, High-Resolution Downloads</u>, National Archives and Records Administration <u>Michigan Constitution of 1835</u> (image), Archives of Michigan at <u>SeekingMichigan.org</u>

### Which Constitution?

Michigan's judges swear (or affirm) to uphold the Michigan Constitution and the U.S. Constitution, so they must have detailed knowledge of both. How much do you know about these two important documents? (Answers below.)

	U.S.	Mich.
1) World's oldest written constitution.	0	0
2) Approved by voters in 1963.	0	0
3) Defines three branches of government.	0	0
4) Begins "We the people"	0	0
5) Protects the rights of those accused of crimes.	0	0
6) Protects the rights of crime victims.	0	$\circ$
7) Guarantees the right of trial by jury.	0	0

Answers: I) U.S., 2) Mich., 3) Both, 4) Both, 5) Both, 6) Mich., 7) Both.

# **Visualizing Constitution Data**

#### **Word Clouds**

When analyzing complex texts such as the U.S. Constitution, it can be helpful to create visual representations. Word clouds highlight words that appear frequently in source text (excluding common words). They can be used to identify ideas, themes, and key terms. In fact, scholars from the <a href="Comparative Constitutions Project">Constitutions Project</a> use word clouds to <a href="wisualize data">visualize data</a> when comparing constitutions from different countries.

Teachers and students can create and analyze their own word clouds by pasting <u>text from the U.S. Constitution</u> into free websites such as Wordle or Tagxedo.

#### Charts, Tables, & Timelines

Below are links to additional graphic data about the U.S. Constitution and constitutions around the world. These sources were created by the Comparative Constitutions Project and their partners.

Table of <u>Common Preamble Phrases</u> featured in the "What's in a Preamble?" lesson from the <u>American Bar Association</u>, <u>Division for Public Education</u>

<u>Historical Sources for the Bill of Rights</u>, co-created with the National Constitution Center

Timeline of Constitutions

World Constitutional Holidays



**Preamble** 



Article III

Judicial Branch of Government



# We the People of the

United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

# "We the People" Video

The phrase "We the People," which appears at the beginning of the U. S. Constitution and the Michigan Constitution, is featured in a 3-minute video by the Michigan Supreme Court. Appropriate for elementary and above, the discussion is presented by Milton L. Mack, Jr., State Court Administrator and former probate judge.

# Writing a Classroom Constitution

In the <u>We the Students</u> lesson from the Constitutional Rights Foundation of Chicago, students use the U.S. Constitution as a model to write their own preamble and "articles" (rules) for their classroom.

# **Using Primary Sources**

Constitution Day is the perfect time to introduce students of all levels to primary sources! The following websites offer resources and ideas for teaching with our nation's and state's founding documents.

Constitution Day Primary Source Tool Kit Library of Congress

Docs Teach: Revolution and the New Nation National Archives

Teaching with Documents: Observing Constitution Day National Archives



# **Close-Reading the Constitution**

A number of resources are available for close-reading the Constitution at different grade levels.

#### **Elementary**

<u>Teaching Democracy: What Is the Purpose of the Preamble?</u> Cal Humanities and the California History-Social Science Project

Gouverneur Morris Bill of Rights Institute

#### Middle School

Preamble – Words We Live By: Your Annotated Guide to the Constitution Engage NY

#### **High School**

ELA Reading Informational Text (see pages 48-49) Illinois State Board of Education



# **Definitions at Vocabulary.com**

Words and definitions important for reading the Constitution:

- Preamble
- Bill of Rights I
- Bill of Rights II
- Amendments XI–XXVII